



County of San Diego

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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January 14, 2014

TO: College and University Student Health Services

RE: 2013/14 Influenza Activity

Dear Medical Directors:

Influenza activity is now widespread in San Diego County, as well as nationally. There has been a rapid increase in the number of locally reported cases over the past weeks. Some institutions have been noticing clusters of influenza-like illness (ILI)* and have asked about reporting requirements to Public Health Services (PHS). This letter provides an update about when to call PHS, as well as information about how to help keep your students and staff healthy.

Reporting to Public Health Services. While influenza in general is not a reportable disease, PHS is asking for assistance from local health care providers with enhanced influenza surveillance via the following actions:

- Report any laboratory-positive influenza detections to the PHS Epidemiology Program by FAX at 858-715-6458.
- Notify the Epidemiology Program at 619-692-8499 if you become aware of a student from your school who was admitted to the ICU or has died from suspected or confirmed influenza.
- Notify the Epidemiology Program if there is a cluster of ILI (at least two cases in a 72-hour period) in one of your student residence buildings and at least one of these cases has laboratory-confirmed influenza. This situation may constitute an outbreak.

**ILI is defined as fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 37.8°C) plus cough and/or sore throat.*

Prevention. We appreciate the efforts of college and university health personnel in preventing the spread of influenza. There are many respiratory infections that can spread from person-to-person and cause symptoms similar to influenza. The recommendations listed below may not only help reduce the spread of influenza, but other viruses and bacteria circulating in the community, as well.

Here are recommendations that can help keep your students and staff healthy through this influenza season.

Encourage students and staff to get a yearly influenza vaccine.


- The seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older, unless there is a contraindication determined by a medical provider.
- In addition, it is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that all health care personnel obtain the annual vaccination.
- This year's seasonal influenza vaccine is considered to be a good match with the circulating strains. The vaccine is safe and effective, and can help prevent severe complications and hospitalization due to influenza. Keep in mind, however, that no vaccine is 100% effective.
- Influenza vaccines have a very good safety record. Hundreds of millions of Americans have received the vaccine over the years. The most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site. Lastly, the influenza vaccine cannot give you the flu!

Encourage students and staff to take everyday prevention steps.

- Promote good respiratory etiquette. It is recommended that ill persons cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, or to cough into their elbows.
- Encourage good hand hygiene, which means hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water is not available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used.
- Clean surfaces that are touched often routinely, using the general cleaning products already in use and following the manufacturer's instructions.
 - These surfaces may include desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, any hands-on learning objects, faucet handles, and phones.
- Promote policies that encourage students and staff who are ill to stay home.
 - Students who are ill with ILI should stay home until at least 24 hours after their fevers are gone (without the use of medicine).
 - If a healthcare provider prescribes antiviral medication, students and staff should be encouraged to take it as prescribed and complete the course of medicine.

We will continue to monitor influenza activity within the county through the season and are available to answer any questions you may have. Please call the Epidemiology Program at 619-692-8499 for additional information. Please also visit www.cahansandiego.org to register to receive periodic California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) San Diego alerts, including local updates on influenza.

Sincerely,


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